

DELTA

No. 4

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delta

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PROLOGUE

This issue is an experiment. Like the last, it will have to sell without publicity-measures and popularity-bids which, in varying degrees, characterise other Cambridge ventures. That communication tends nowadays to be most carefully made in verse justifies, if true, a verse magazine.

An outside critic has reviewed *delta's* verse which is also considered in this editorial. Neil Morris can hardly be accused of favourable bias, if only because he edits a well-known Cambridge magazine. *delta* presents work and the discussion of that work simultaneously. The evidence which is the foundation of two critical views is before the reader, together with those views.

Only verse has been included which seems sufficiently *there* on the printed page to be discussible. A certain local vitality has therefore been a minimum requirement for inclusion.

Drain's *A Christian Hobby* has an urbane verse-movement which quietly presents us with an incongruous existing situation. The train is explicitly (11.15-18) identified with the Christian God, deliberately belittled. After the portentous

*They have learned to pay
To thundering Caesar honours that are his,
And as he whips by. . . .*

is the deflation

. . . with explosive fizz.

Such 'bathos' has therefore a function. This (rather ridiculous) God is unaffected by the children (11.8-9) though it adversely affects them (11.13-14). The implicit criticism of this may be localised in such irony as

Humility their innocent concern

for if humility is valuable it is a way of life, not something as trivial as is suggested by the word *concern*. This refraining from the more emotionally charged comment which Neil Morris apparently requires presents a situation which the more clearly condemns itself. What might be flatness is redeemed by an irony less liable to sentimental construction than overt compassion. The children

write his number in their little books.

Their environment compels this reaction. The mechanical Christianity of a mechanical age creates the God it deserves.

Drain writes within limits with a certain adequacy. By contrast, Shiela Hardy presents immaturity, though with unusual vigour seen in the series of more or less locally realized impressions which is *New World*, 1954. Phrases like *mediaeval enamelled May* are, though 'literary', vivid. As Morris remarks, the opening of *Between Two Worlds* owes something of its 'romantic' surge to Dylan Thomas, and of its contrasting central passage to Eliot. Behind each diction is a different sensibility. These two dictions are contrasted attitudes. The first section would, by itself, be unsatisfactory, but what Morris calls its 'afflatus' is opposed to the bare

This is not Hell. Here was the blitz of the soul.

Its recapitulatory identification with adolescence (11.35-39) suggests transitoriness at once of youthful passion and of the passion of a 'youthful' age. The decay is in seed in 11.4-6. Such pressure as the hectic opening brings about (and, incidentally, explains) the blitz of the soul (1.18). Identification of adolescent energy and disillusion with two forms of Elizabethanism is, though not convincing, ingenious.

Morris says nothing is seen of 'the other country'. In 1.14, we have the admittedly unfocussed *bitter*, but this is limited in application by the more defined *waste*, while *paved with rubble* surely controverts his contention. *Paved* has urban associations which are broken down by the disorder implied by *rubble*. The poem, though not fully successful, is more live than might be assumed from Morris's remarks.

The acumen apparent in the definition and subtlety of Ward's *Going Away* may have led Morris into a too-easy accusation of elaboration with its concomitant of externality—nowhere justified. Morris says that the antithesis of 'trivial conversation' and 'emotional luxuriance' does not define feeling. He has not proved these assumptions. The dialogue is on two levels significant: fictional casualness and the ironic echoing of a state of mind. Emotional luxuriance is not evident in (for instance) the complex irony of 11.11-13 which is brought out in the car movement's preventing concentration of emotion into the pain now being felt in the railway carriage.

Morris possibly confuses flatness of irony with flatness of statement. The words in this poem are active. Telegraph poles are transformed, through the mutation of 'signs', into sticks; they remain the whole time through reminder a punishment, are behind 11.19-20. Morris apparently dislikes the last section's analysis of the initial dramatic impact, yet has neither shown it to be functionless nor generalized. The basis of a justification of this poem's inclusion would be its energy of movement (which so flexibly accommodates dialogue) and the distinctness with which objects are seen—

Telegraph poles collapse behind on the lines.

To the Loud Wind shows an over-subtle intellect regarding positive force. The paradoxical first line—one cannot *mime* a wind, though this 'intellect' tries—postulates an imitation of life rather than living. Abstractness has here a function. *Sounding luck*, a desirable concept, is unrealized by the *maiden intellect*. If it were realized, that intellect would be itself living and positive, not imitating life behind barriers of books. The metronome performs complex and, presumably (since it is a *metronome*), useless mathematical figures. This is adduced as an indication of a complexity which may be more than the reward its unravelling offers.

I agree with Morris's view of Levenson. His over-distinctive verse-movement encourages limitation, but, apart from an obtrusive *quaintly* (1.5), *Ostend's* words tend towards a common end and give within those limitations an unpretentious experience.

The last four lines of Silverton's *Death of a Virgin* present two opposed images powerfully developing into fusion which defines the earlier part's incompletely fulfilled possibilities. *Seaside Town—Tuscany* fragmentarily leaps to life in detached phrases like *chemically vivid*, but is less controlled than Silverton's other poem.

The comment which has been here provided seems to me less liable to misuse than the possibility of editorial blackmail implied by the editor-poet pre-publication collaboration Morris suggests. Perhaps *delta's* verse is disappointing, although a comparison with a national literary magazine like *Stand*, *Mandrake*, or *Nine* might not confirm this. We have at least presented verse capable of being discussed at a serious level. Few 'national literary magazines' can say so much.

A CHRISTIAN HOBBY

The current hobby among schoolboys is
Spotting train numbers; they have learned to pay
To thundering Caesar honours that are his,
And as he whips by with explosive fizz
They drop their bats to see him; train stops play. 5

The ceremony power demands is slight:
They write his number in their little books;
If they threw apple cores as well they might
No brakes would bark, no fearful guard alight—
The train is as impervious as it looks. 10

But manners prevent behaviour so remiss.
When it has gone they walk to Sunday School—
(Bad light stopped further play; analysis
Shows that the smoke had much to do with this)—
Where good as gold they learn the golden rule: 15

Be meek and mild. So, meekly, they return
To where the furious trains go tearing by,
Humility their innocent concern;
For here by the awesome engines, they discern,
Is where such Christian precepts best apply. 20

RICHARD DRAIN

INNER CIRCLE

Feet that chance to touch
Across the carriage floor
Hastily withdraw;
Such contact is not much
But eyes might have to meet
More sensitive than feet;
Those eyes might explore,
These eyes might reveal
What we are and feel;
Some say no deceit
Can keep up its disguise
When eyes meet telling eyes;
Danger, then, is real
Since feelings, thoughts, are such
When feet chance to touch.

RICHARD DRAIN

BY HEART

“ This gun fires if you drop it; men have died
Unnerved into a careless suicide;
The regulations must not be defied.”

“ The regulations lead to suicide;
They drill away until the nerve has died;
This gun fires if you drop it; some have tried.”

RICHARD DRAIN

(Published by kind permission of *The New Statesman and Nation*.)

FLIGHT FROM REMEMBRANCE

As if returned from war, paupered and cold,
To find myself unknown by my own children,
I had not wished to sleep for fear that dream
Would suddenly break the landscape that I hold
Now, in these hands, farm, village, and wood, 5
As once before landscapes had fallen apart
And familiar doors run with familiar blood;
As if I did not dare to turn the key,
Afraid to see the brief note on the table
And discover the meaning of a casual deed; 10
As if I was not able
To face again the stare in the dead man's face;
I fled, I do not know where, I do not remember.
. . . . And yet memory
Vaguely persists, is with me. 15

What is—no matter how—dead now, long buried,
Can be exhumed, ghosts do not die
So easily, do not presume it.
At most they are stored away—for safe keeping.

Just so, there is no exit to this flight, 20
There is no end to fear's anatomy.

CHRISTOPHER LEVENSON

OSTEND

Rain over the sand sends its cool messages
Of welcome to the steamer entering
The dead resort. In small hotels and lounges
People stand lost in windows, doing nothing.

Concrete, half-empty buildings, quaintly scarred
And stuck up with glazed brick gaze out to sea;
Low-season waves batter the promenade,
Unable to wash one stone of it away.

CHRISTOPHER LEVENSON

STORM

All the doors banged suddenly in the wind,
The day was broken. Who, watching the cloudless valley,
Luxurious in fern, moss, loitering bramble,
Could have suspected it? But now, for no reason
Beating tramp and shepherd into hiding
Under tall barns, the rains scout
Each silent farmstead, the electric storm
Cracks the oppressive landscape into fragments,
The fells run delirious and wild with water.
Here random light picks out, in silhouette,
The anxious lost communities, adrift,
Caught only in a glimpse through dark-stained windows
Of cottages, where from the one beam swings
A hurricane-lamp, companion
Against the night's close frontiers.

CHRISTOPHER LEVENSON

GOING AWAY

Gradient signs, the gateposts at the crossing,
Telegraph poles collapse behind on the lines:—
If I were leaving you to return, these falling
Backward posts, retiring and retreating signs,
Would be sticks to beat me, but would also show 5
That the way to return is first, to go.

In spite of myself, I'm looking back
While making conversation. "Are you going far?"
Too far, too fast. "They're really very slack
In service here. I should have come by car 10
Where I'd have felt at home." At home on rubber wheels
Moving from indecision to indecision heals
Certainty of pain—and wordy ironies rhyme
Away thought into crooked corners. "The time?"

Time (friends say) to look forward, and begin to care, 15
But the telegraph poles post back
With tales of those who plan new futures where
The past is present by being excluded there.
It will (they say) pass, the tightest string goes slack
By not being used, and takes another key. 20
I look at a paper or a window, but lack
A mind to be interested, or anything to see.

DAVID E. WARD

MEETING

As, between deep branches moving on a bright
Sky, wind torn clouds scatter flecks of white,
So here in the stillness we are walking
Through a green moist wood, with quick, light
Hearts, hands swinging, laughing and talking.

As the wood that cuts light away makes us see
Only sharp light in beams piercing to the roots
Of the trees, so, and it is always so, we
Are home before we find mud on our boots.

DAVID E. WARD

PENNINES

A grey neglect spills on the dry stone walls
Breathing dust and decay on to the sheep pens
And ragged trees, dressing with grime hens,
A few geese, even the clean becks and falls.
If the people here have vanished, seeking
The green lowland farms, what does it matter?
They will breed and grow faster and fatter
In the market towns, or in the reeking
Acid air of mill towns. Have no pity
For the mean astringent earth of these hills—
They will sit sparse and slow while the valley fills
With young men looking for the pretty
Baubles the multiple stores have offered
Them and their women. And when the city
Has taken all they have—their lives, their wills,
Ugly with the closed care they have suffered
They will retire in age to the hills.

DAVID E. WARD

"FIGHTING WORDS" by Thom Gunn (Fantasy Press, 8/6)
"A FORM OF WORDS" by George Macbeth (Fantasy Press, 8/6)

Mr Gunn and Mr Macbeth are, I am sure, talented young men—their verse impressed their contemporaries at Oxford and Cambridge, and they are now busy creating small audiences for themselves outside University circles. They have, in fact, had a clear run, having only had to deal with intimate minority audiences who must, as all minorities must, take such a strong line against the attacks of the Philistines that they finally are deceived into forgetting the faults of the poet and seeing only virtues. If anyone has retained enough objectivity to tell these writers of their deficiencies, I doubt if they have been given a hearing.

Mr Macbeth, I suspect, is more strongly aware of his deficiencies than his audience. Not many people will have bothered to read his verse, so I had better explain that it is a rather precious parlour-game in which it is necessary to have by one's side a comprehensive dictionary and scribbling pad, so that the tortuous paths of the author's fancy can be plotted in diagrammatic form.

Daphnis and Chloe

*When once proleptic of the kiss
Their parted lips stood poised in air
No stellar parallax could tear
Heart from heart in hendiadys*

*Yet now in strained hyperbaton
Their brains run on to flat despair
And no quick anodyne can spare
The splitting headache of a pun.*

*For now no zeugma of the sun
Can force their differences to bliss
Or clothe in Love's parathesis
The hell of being one from one.*

Mr Macbeth invites us to join him in a game, the charm of which is the discovery of the meaning by dissection of the poem—what we do not find is a heart or a bloodstream. This inevitable surgical aspect of the reader's approach to the poem suggests that we might attempt to diagnose more precisely the kind of inadequacy which makes Mr Macbeth wish to write in this way.

The inability to communicate successfully in verse often results in some kind of device for self-defence. For instance, the back door of irony through which the poet hopes to escape by pointing to the further levels of ironic or sub-ironic meaning, which release him from the necessity of admitting the inadequacy of the emotion expressed, or his inability to express it fully. Then there is the ambiguity game—many undergraduate poets hope to impress by applying as a technique the kind of effects which Empson finds in many of the greatest poets. What they refuse to understand is that these effects should grow from the necessity of expressing a complex concept, and are not, in Shakespeare or Hopkins, for example, primarily a method of making simple material more complex and apparently more worthy of examination. Mr Macbeth is a more simple case. He retreats behind a barrier of big words, cheaply neat antitheses, and overworked metaphors, which appeal to him because of their pedantic audacity.

Quite obviously, someone has been taken in by Macbeth—he would not otherwise have been considered worthy of this excellently produced volume. It may be difficult to see how Macbeth has taken in his public—it is quite easy to see some of the reasons why Mr Gunn attracted our immediate predecessors. He almost always sounds good, has a competent surface technique, and though his typical vein of reflective introspection is so limited as to make all the poems he produced merge into one, he appears at times to be attempting to express a genuine though rarified state of mind which we can recognise. The surface attractiveness breaks down quite quickly into a series of clever devices—to take one example from the beginning of “A Mirror for Poets” (p. 31)

It was a violent time. Wheels, racks and fires

In every writer's mouth, and not mere rant.

Certain shrewd herdsmen. . . .

This has the typical movement of Gunn, beginning, as so many of his poems do, with a short clipped assertion designed to arrest the reader and make him look for some significance lying under the prose meaning of the words. After all this is poetry isn't it? “And not mere rant”. Another assertive phrase appearing to conceal under its prose meaning so much significance “Certain shrewd herdsmen”—here we have in miniature a perfect example of the assertive, apparently meaningful trick of expression in Gunn. The adjective “certain” is sufficient to express limitation but does not clearly state or suggest the limitation we are expected to feel. Gunn is saying to the reader “Go on, think out what it means to you”, and this kind of attitude is not good enough. The poet must know precisely what he wishes to communicate, if not intellectually, certainly with sufficient emotional knowledge to exclude the possibility of the communication being merely of an effect, and not of an emotion, a state of mind, or a concept.

Macbeth's verse, then, is a simple, clearly defined symptom of the disease in undergraduate verse. Gunn's verse has a more subtle and complex case history. To discover fully the way in which audience and poet delude each other into producing and accepting dishonest work would need more space than I have available. However, it seems to me that this trick of suggestive assertion and associated devices, clothing and swelling themes that are not only small but often silly, is the typical method by which Gunn appeals to his audience, and the typical kind of stimulus which they expect from him. “Beach Head” is a perfect example—the poet may protest that the cinematic sentimentality with which a very ordinary situation is swelled into

A minister's seduction of the crown

is ironic. The irony, however, is that kind of escape irony which I have described as “back door irony” by which the poet hopes to escape from being charged with the self-dramatizing sentimentality to which he seems so attached—“the tall sad man”, “a brain-sick enemy”, and “I am not living, in hell's pains I ache”.

I find all this rather depressing, because Gunn has some elusive kind of talent—occasionally a passage, often strongly derived from Graves or Eliot (as in parts of “Wind in the Street”) has a quiet, modest attraction, but the facet which has been encouraged and developed in Gunn is, inevitably, the attractive competently cultivated idiosyncracies which impress his immediate audience as novel, fluent, and fashionable.

DAVID E. WARD

“SIRMIONE PENINSULAR” by Stephen Spender (Ariel Poems:
Faber & Faber, 2/-)

“THE OTHER WING” by Louis MacNeice (Ariel Poems :
Faber & Faber, 2/-)

Personally, I prefer an old-fashioned Christmas card. Even the illustrations are more satisfying, being less pretentious, than those in the first two productions of the ‘Ariel’ Poems. And the verse..

“Sirmione Peninsular” (Spender) is the poet’s idea of a poem. Its preliminary vagueness—

Places I shared with her, things that she touched

is not compensated by the succeeding involved and uninteresting images. A careful and coldly external construction of images is typical of Spender’s work—as in

The wings of the water flashing through torn brick arches.

It adds nothing to the poem. By his repetition of certain phrases—“mountain circled”, “mountains ringed glassily”, “painted on glass”—and his use of familiar clichés—“flashing” or “torn”—Spender attempts to create a scene and an emotion neither of which is genuine or nearly realized. In the last section comes an unsuccessful and naïve attempt at the Wordsworthian grand style—

Now the mountains might fall and crush me

and an “exaltation” of thought—

I am unseeing alone,

all of which culminates in the Victorian picture of the young lady, with her

Lips parted as though to greet the flight of a bird.

All this has been done before—by Shakespeare and by Tin Pan Alley—with far more imagination and sincerity.

The second poem, “The Other Wing” (MacNeice) is more successful in disguising its paucity of thought and vagueness of feeling beneath a mass of half realized images. A more ambitious poem, concerned with the Greek and Christian civilizations, it is a greater failure than the first poem. Again, all is applied from the outside—from the lifeless attempt at onomatopoeia in the first line, to the self-conscious use, in the last, of

Poor Tom’s a-cold.

MacNeice assumes, apparently, that his readers will have a greater familiarity with the Greek than with the Christian religion; thus he attempts to be obscurely clever when dealing with the one, and more explicit with the other. The Fool is brought in from ‘Lear’ for obvious reasons: in effect, however, he serves to indicate the inferiority of the work.

It is, one can only remark, a pity that a series of poems, which began so well with “Marina” and “Journey of the Magi”, should end, not with a bang, but a whimper!

THE LAURELS

These christening laurels with their sooty leaves
Which here repel the caller and the street
Will never wreath a poet, nor,
In solemn order, grace a funeral bier,
Nor bear the bruising of a victor's heel
Nor yield arcadian lovers quiet retreat:
But, transubstantiate Daphnes, rooted here
Impervious to dirt and fog and smoke,
Perpetuate with their rank and chilly growth
The grim, unconscious and suburban joke.

ROBERT ARNOLD

TO THE LOUD WIND

Mime the loud wind in pain—
The worded room will yield
Your canny agony,
Not excellence nor will.

Dreams and asylums build
No words of sounding luck.
The metronome of guilt
Does sums behind the lock.

A maiden intellect
Sits safe indoors and still
When loud complexity
Thunders electrical.

Not subtlety nor guilt
But will made concentrate
Shouts the loud wind to fill
The worded intellect.

DONALD HALL

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

I see there is no summer for the soul.
 I know and must renounce the kindling frenzy,
 Flower of the naked nerve, sun's anguished drive,
 The fret of the blood's green fever, and the sway
 And strain and fraying fury of the sap 5
 Which, sick and smouldering, curdles in my heart.
 Ravage the rose-leaved lyric, subtly skeined
 In disembodied voices, and the lute
 Drooping and rich with death; the song that sees
 The charnel beneath silken lids of death. 10
 I turned away from the song of the silver swan,
 The delicate dirge, and the blue-haired deities.
 Instead I have gone into another country,
 Bitter and waste and strange, and paved with rubble.
 If, in a nightmare, you wake and you are brought 15
 To the frontier of this territory, I am your guide.
 I, standing with you but apart from you,
 Say: "This is not Hell. Here was the blitz of the soul
 Which we are now surveying and rebuilding."
 But you, drawn back into your fluid nightmare, 20
 Do not look into my eyes. I think you dare not.
 My eyes are the eyes of the dead. You will not come
 Again to this country; you are very wise.
 Perhaps, one day, reading the newspaper,
 You will look to see if the plan was ever finished, 25
 The reconstruction complete; but, finding nothing,
 No news of that strange country, will forget.
 Alone, in my winter core, I am still rebuilding.
 That winter, bitter and barren, is my country;
 In it I am alone. I do not know 30
 When the new soul will be ready, nor can I say
 Whether, when it is finished, I shall even need it.
 I do not know where I shall next be sent to.
 I stand between two worlds, of living and dying.
 I remember the flood of midsummer, the running fire 35
 In the pulse of the sultry adolescent (myself
 And others) reading Rimbaud and Baudelaire,
 Cadences of corruption, rich rust of senses
 Into high summer sorrow. I am a nomad
 From one winter to another; I must not regret. 40
 My soul has found its country. Yet I know
 When winter comes, it winters all my heart.

SHIELA HARDY

NEW WORLD, 1954

Saturn and Sirius alternate, light-years blown like
Inconsequential paper-scrap above
The metropolis of young minds and springfired bodies,
Anonymous; somewhere, always, love is moving
From zenith to nadir, solstice to solstice.
Summer, sweltering in its baroque of leaves,
Discovers many Juliets in mad gardens
Under a drunken, Oriental moon;
Summer, whose every evening blows sensation
Past spire and stone, and round the yellow corners,
Along the sibylline, peacock patterns of night;
And passers-by become a tragic chorus;
There is a willow grows aslant a brook—
The dead undergraduate, nobody knew why;
Too young, too young; death running in the river.
Too young to die, all among the hoar leaves
And the glassy stream of punts and picnics,
Opheliesque; mediaeval enamelled May
Quickens the tempo to hide the false crescendo,
The conspiratorial web of truth; the river
Wears music to cover up its dark pollution;
Checks the laugh, the anticipated kiss,
Reminding where it lost its virginity.
The stare of the city's sulphurous, outcrop stars
Calmly ignores all fates, in heaven-hoar train.
The city, all blond with summer, gathers its sun
For all time, the bitter gold of the last frenzy;
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.
All the time, Lycidas in the hoar leaves
Counts his funereal flowers; the pensive river
With madrigals for mourning tells its tears
To the run-colour mornings; drains like music
Through time's hollow flute the glassy stream.

SHIELA HARDY

SEASIDE TOWN—TUSCANY

I.

The beginning had sprung from granite
a silver cleft among the olive slopes
rock-splitting source set in crystal
an old altar for an ancient cult
in the tired heart of ancient thickets.
The blue-worn marbles hold the keys
but wisely retain the secrets; and the sun
bursts suddenly forth like a blazing crown
making all light.

II.

The pagan mysteries are gone in a sickle's sweep
transitory heat-filaments dancing into oblivion,
leaving a white suppuration, a fungoid smear
across the green cliffs lapped by blue waves chemically vivid.
The camera's lies are painted on post-cards.
It is siesta time for the municipal whore,
and, lulled by night images a gap-mouth snores,
anticipating the evening.

III.

A scene of magic, tubes of liquid fire
spell out the staples—Cinzano!—Ristorante!—
Only as the cobbled quay life crystallises
in nets drying in the cool sea breeze,
in a mandolin chorus and some cheap wine—
a consummation beneath a stuccoed porch
under a peeling poster.

MOSTYN SILVERTON

DEATH OF A VIRGIN

Family choked with convention
shiny with a carbolic sense
of stiff mahogany and horsehair
fill the house with a cold harvest.
There is no ripe maize
no rich profusion of russet—
only lilies and green wreaths
of a depressing sameness.
Condolences from relatives
in uneasy black who miss
the implication of the rigid outline
tensed in death with a little of life's reality,
and pound the looming richness
into grey finger dust—
an arid water course.
Their present grief is like a dirty tide
drowning the dying gull:
one last stilted tremor
oil feathered among the driftwood.

MOSTYN SILVERTON

AN AFTERNOON IN SUSSEX

(A young girl is taken by her fiancé to visit what was once his home.)

I warned you against returning,
But you were insistent, wishing to show me the place
Where your childhood happiness flamed.

So the lodge we passed
With its tidy bend was a mask to the tragedy
Of a country house in decay,
And at first the gayest of memories flooded your voice,
As you found the lobelia-baskets on their stands,
And the cage where the raspberries grew
As you remembered it.

But much had changed,
And you seemed to expect some sign of a common grief
To see the maples transplanted, the fish-pond silt,
And the tennis-court overgrown,
And there were the intimate touches I should have shared,
The bank where you sat while the gardener shot a rabbit,
The lawn where you took your tea.

And because I laughed
As we pushed through the Lovers' Walk, you seemed angry.
But why?

I was an unmoved watcher, a stranger there,
Without part in your haunted evening.

Last we came
To the site of your mother's own rose-beds, to the garden
Of someone I never knew.
And there I said to you: "Why did you come back now?"
And you answered "How can you ask? I loved this place."
And suddenly hid your face.

So we went home,
But not at our ease, delved in the photo-album,
Troubled the ghosts.

And the scars of time were unhealed.

MARK ROSKILL

EPILOGUE

I have found in discussion with *delta's* editor that we differ over several of the poems he has included. In his editorial he to some extent defends his choice and the policy that dictated it. No two people will recreate a piece of verse for themselves in exactly the same way. What is essential is that they both should consider it as worth (and as rewarding) the effort of recreation, worth preserving.

The most fashionable (and the most sophisticated) poet represented is Richard Drain, who has been published in a number of weeklies. *Inner Circle* and *A Christian Hobby* are comments upon current experience. In both, the attitude is detached and the writer appears only superficially engaged. There is no exploration of the situation in the tube, but merely the most external observation, expressed with a kind of *simplesse*. In *A Christian Hobby* energy is directed not at any presentation of the children's predicament and relation to their urban environment, but rather at avoiding such a responsibility by maintaining a tone of urbane and *superior* mock-simplicity:

They write his number in their little books

which admits the comfortable incorporation of bathos,

Bad light stopped further play; analysis

Shows that the smoke had much to do with this

(neatly and glibly avoiding genuine significance) and the slick and tawdry—"train stops play." The irony throughout is used to exclude the feeling that should animate it if it were to be of value. The movement of the verse is tedious. The third poem, *By Heart*, is effective enough as an exercise.

Shiela Hardy's verse shows little ability to control course of feeling or idea. The emotion of *Between Two Worlds* is presented without self-criticism or impersonality and with an afflatus that owes its force in turn to Dylan Thomas and the Eliot of *Little Gidding*. The succession of images of lines 2-6 do not develop or augment one another in association, nor are they focussed at all. (Do nerves flower? And if we grant that they do, of what kind is their flowering?) Is the insistent alliteration more than indulgence? In lines 13-34 nothing is *seen* of the 'other country'; it is *stated* to be "bitter and waste and strange" and "bitter and barren." Exactly how is this soul blitzed? The verse here, too, is flaccid and diffuse. The poem becomes finally embarrassing (11.35-6) and, with

When winter comes, it winters all my heart

merely trite. If feeling of this kind isn't in some way framed, criticised, than can it be worth communicating? Can one write of adolescence until one is capable of the effort of seeing it as adolescent? *New World*, 1954 is similarly incoherent: a succession of effects, over-ingenious, contrived, often wilfully obscure.

Richard Drain is competent and assured, and if *delta's* motive for publishing is to expose verse to criticism, then he should be published. Should Miss Hardy? Isn't an editor's function here to assist development by a private attempt at advice, suggestion and criticism, rather than to publish?

David Ward's *Going Away* is peculiarly the work of a man with a clear knowledge of what a good poem should be. This knowledge seems to have led him to over-elaborate the expression of a slim content of feeling. Does the too carefully *contrived* antithesis between trivial conversation and luxuriance in emotion define or point to genuine definition of feeling? The first stanza, too, seems forced and lacking in impact in the articulation of the sequence of metaphor. The situation is first dramatically thrust at the reader, then it is too consciously refined. The relatively subtle means used in the second stanza conflict with the artlessness of lines 6 and 18, and lead one to ask whether the poet is genuinely grappling with the feeling that gave the poem its impetus. This is to me, then, an unsuccessful but honest attempt, rather than a poem. *Pennines* is earlier work, and less ambitious. The attitude is perhaps oversimplified, the handling of line and rhyme a little clumsy. In *Meeting* the poem seems almost rarefied away.

To the Loud Wind is so inconclusively and obscurely worked as to be worthless. One's all too familiar with this kind of playing with abstracts (agony—excellence—luck—guilt—subtlety—will—'worded intellect') in post-war Oxford poetry.

I found Christopher Levenson more rewarding. *Ostend* is slight but most competent. *Storm*, though rather "literary," is again successful, though less of an organized whole. In *Flight from Remembrance* the writer seems not yet equal to dealing honestly with his subject. The movement is indeterminate; there are obtrusive echoes of Hopkins (1.16) and Eliot (11.8-12).

Mostyn Silverton seems unwilling sufficiently to discipline a momentarily keen vision (which can produce an arresting line) into a poem.

The majority of *delta's* poems, then, are disappointing. As is so often the case in Cambridge the writers are largely either unwilling or unable to make the effort of really grappling with their subject and ensuring effective communication. The effort is great. Have they been aided—given private readers' reactions before publication? Or is this as good a magazine of verse as Cambridge (writer, audience, and editor) is capable of producing? I am reluctant to believe so.

NEIL MORRIS



